

English I (Writing
Supplement)

Intermediate Division
Ontario Assessment Instru-
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ENGLISH I (WRITING SUPPLEMENT)
INTERMEDIATE DIVISION
ONTARIO ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT POOL

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Queen's Park
Toronto, Ontario

ISBN 0-7743-6047-X
ISSN 0228-0957
ON 01920

This package contains assessment materials related to the writing components of the Ministry of Education curriculum guideline, Intermediate Division English 1977. The package should be added to ENGLISH I following page W-82.



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INTRODUCTION

The writing stimuli published initially in English I were restricted to topics in traditional writing modes that had received extensive trial in Ontario and New Brunswick.

An early recommendation of the Subject Advisory Group was to develop and trial additional stimuli that would expand the range of modes and topics in the Writing section of English I.

The following pages contain additional writing stimuli that have proved successful at various grade levels. Sample compositions with comments are provided for each stimulus.

Teachers may use the various stimuli in a one-period formal setting in order to diagnose prevalent strengths and weaknesses. Thus the stimuli can become aids to effective programming.

Although suggested times are given for each stimulus, teachers should not hesitate to adjust these times to meet the needs of their classes.

As well, the stimuli may be used over several classroom periods, with, for example, the first such period being used for discussion and other pre-writing activities, perhaps including discussion of sample compositions provided in this document; the students in the second period could write a first draft; in the third period, they could exchange and discuss one another's papers, prior to writing a final draft.

The compositions, drawn chiefly from Grades 8 and 10 in the screening trials, illustrate some of the variety of treatment possible.

They are not a representative sample of performance in writing across these grades; instead, some of the better compositions are presented as models which students might emulate. Also some of the different ways (effective and less effective) in which students have responded to these stimuli are provided as a guide to the teacher in applying various scoring strategies.

Even with examples weak in many respects, the comments focus on strengths that do appear and suggest directions for improvement taking advantage of those strengths.

Because the stimuli were screened in a small number of classes, it would not be appropriate, in any case, to put forward samples of the best---worst as these could not be considered typical of writing at the grade level in the province. It is hoped that the examples given will be useful to teachers in discussing writing with students: in some instances, as models; in some instances, suggesting ideas for alternative approaches; and in others, for critical scrutiny.

The General Introduction for OAIP Writing (pp. 25-26) makes brief reference to "primary trait" scoring as an alternative that may provide useful information concerning the manner in which different groups of students respond in a particular mode, information which may be of value when applied to the writing program.

Variations on "primary trait" scoring were applied to a number of the compositions, with some interesting patterns emerging.

For example, for the fantasy 'Polar Bear in the Shower' where students are not told to take one stance as opposed to another it is of much interest to know how many and at which grade levels freely chose to sustain the fantasy ('Accept the Challenge') and how many did not. In a program context in which teachers wish to encourage fantasy, one might assign the polar bear stimulus, without direction, at the outset of a unit, and classify responses, sharing that information and illustrative compositions with the students, and at the end of the unit assign a similar stimulus, comparing numbers who 'took off' into the fantasy world.

For other assignments some specific variations on criteria were employed in analytic scoring (see pp. W 20-23) and found helpful.

In some instances, therefore, following the topic, suggestions for alternative methods of scoring are provided.

The Ministry of Education wishes to acknowledge the significant contributions of the many individuals who helped in the development of this supplement. Particular thanks are due to the following:

Principal Investigator

Peter Evans (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Midnorthern Ontario)

Subject Advisory Group

In addition to the members listed in English I, page 7, Krys Croxall and Marie Shantz, representing the English Coordinators and Consultants of Ontario, joined the Subject Advisory Group.

Boards of Education (who assisted in pilot testing of the writing stimuli):

Central Algoma Board of Education

Espanola Board of Education

Manitoulin Board of Education

North Shore Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Sault Board of Education

Sault Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Sudbury Board of Education

Sudbury Roman Catholic Separate School Board

Exposition - Point of View

1. Promises - Should They Always Be Kept?

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 50-60 minutes

The breaking of a promise can be very hurtful both to the person who breaks it and to the person who has been given the promise, but there may be circumstances where the keeping of a promise would be more harmful still.

In a composition of two or three paragraphs explain why, generally, the keeping of promises is important and then, using one or two specific examples, present your case.

EITHER That under almost no circumstances
should a promise be broken

OR That there are circumstances where
it is better not to keep a promise.

If you choose the first, be sure to outline circumstances that would tempt one to break a promise, explaining why, nevertheless, it should, if at all possible, be kept.

If you choose the second, show how special circumstances make the keeping of the promise more harmful than breaking it.

Some Advice:

While you may, for either viewpoint, wish to choose personal examples, be careful that an example doesn't become a story. Remember that you are presenting a point of view. Don't limit yourself to promises to keep a friend's secret. Consider situations such as those where a person has made a clear commitment to do or not do something.

Promises - Should They Always Be Kept?

I think that promises definitely should not be broken! If there is any promise that cannot be kept then it should have not been made in the first place. If by any chance it is broken it may cause humility and anger. The trust that someone has in you should be treated with a great deal of respect. When a person confides in you it may be something which is personal and they are depending on you to say nothing about the situation. If you are not willing to take on this responsibility then don't get involved! Simply explain your situation and if they are a true, concerned friend they will understand. If they are one who is not liked to be kept in suspense and wants to know the latest news, stay away because they usually tend to gossip.

When promises are made they are usually done with pleasure but when the time comes when we are to fulfill this promise it may be difficult. This is a time for maturity. To prove this you may keep yourself from breaking it.

If temptations are difficult to overcome put yourself in their place and try to imagine your feelings and reactions towards the ordeal. If you no longer become friends, think of the time before when it was considered friendship. The promise should be carried through. You are being depended upon and trusted. When you promise to do something but are not really sincere, then I think you should be ready for the consequences in following through with this promise. Anyone who can be so revengeful and selfish should not be considered the best person to make a promise to. Promises may be very important and if they are broken it may cause much hurt. When hopes are high and then suddenly dropped, these built up feelings may turn into anger or humiliation. This is a natural human reaction and should be controlled in the best manner.

An arrangement made with one other is often important. A time when trust should be used to its full extent. It may be something including other people where in this example there may be many people involved. Anyway, I can conclude by saying again that if you can not keep a promise you should not have made it in the first place.

Comment: This Grade 8 composition exhibits a sound treatment of the stronger alternative: never break a promise. The issues of trust (even where the friendship has broken off) and the recommendation to step into the other person's shoes are both well presented, as are the practical suggestions in paragraph one: if you don't think you can keep the promise, say so in the first place; and, if you don't want to be caught in compromising situations, keep away from gossip.

The weakness lies in the abstractness of the treatment; the composition would be improved with at least one concrete example. \

Keep a Promise, Keep A Friend

I think that promises are important to keep, especially if the person is a close friend or relative, By breaking a promise it can be very hurtful to the other person. If I break a promise it usually makes me feel guilty and depressed. I think of how it affects the other person and how they feel about the situation. Usually the other person tends to feel some conflict and anger when the promise is broken.

When I make a promise to another person I feel it is my responsibility to keep it. I don't like the thought of disappointing people or making them feel frustrated over a decision that was up to me. When it is a close friend it is even more important to think about their feelings. If you're not careful you can lose a good friend.

In some situations it is better to keep a promise. It can hurt the other person but it can also help them. In one situation my friends invited me to go to a movie then a birthday party. A little while before I was to go I realized that my dad would be home alone and he wasn't feeling well. If I stayed home I would disappoint my friends but if I had gone, I would feel guilty. I stayed home.

Another time I promised a friend we would go rollerskating. We had been planning to go for weeks. Something came up and my Aunt was in an accident. If I cancelled the skating it would hurt my friend. If I didn't go to see my relative she would feel hurt and assume I didn't care. That night I visited her. In most cases it is important to keep promises but on occasion it is good to break one when needed.

Comment: A second mature treatment, also from Grade 8, in which the alternative (sometimes one must break a promise) is well developed with concrete illustrations.

The conclusion, though adequate, ought to be a separate paragraph with the argument more effectively summarized.

Promises - Should They Be Kept

A promise should be kept because it tells the inner structure of your friendship and love for one another. Friends tell each other secrets to share their joy, problems and gossip, and should not be told to other people, for they may not like your point of view. Or sometimes secrets that are told for a reason, and may have to be kept for use and responsibility towards being a person.

Secrets are an inside thought which is meant to stay inside and not leak out to unwanted trespassers, knowing the message.

Sometimes secrets are not good to keep for inside thought, because it could get people in trouble either with the law, family, or friends. If your friend is in trouble with the law for grand theft auto, it would be better to let the police in and stop him, because someday he might doing it for a living and make it a habit. You might feel guilty at first, but give him a chance to turn himself in first.

That's why sometimes it is good to keep secrets and sometimes it isn't good.

Comment: Rather frequently the response to the stimulus reduced "promise" to "keeping secrets". On the whole, this limitation produced rather poor compositions with the predictable variations on the theme "Should I tell x's parents that x really did go to that party?"

This composition is one of the better examples of that reduction or limitation. It begins almost too nobly on a grand theme but swiftly "secret" replaces "promise" (with an awkward and unnecessary definition en route). At least, though, the discussion is at a fairly high level - an intent to save a friend from something worse.

Promises Aren't Meant to be Broken

Keeping promises is very important. It helps a person to begin to grow up and take responsibility. Making promises brings people closer when they know that this person went through with their promise. Once a promise is made a person cannot afterwards change their minds because they don't want to do it after all. Breaking a promise loses other people's respect towards the person and sometimes even their own self respect. After breaking a promise saying "I'm sorry" isn't good enough. It takes much more than words to be forgiven for what they had done. Time is something that won't gain the respect back. The trust has to be proved on a later date.

When a person makes a promise to a person they are expected to keep it. When a person says "I promise," it is a way of saying "You can trust me. Once a promise is broken the thought always remains in the person who it had been given to no matter how unimportant the promise was. After a person has broken a promise other people can never be sure if they really mean it this time.

There are some circumstances that a promise should be broken. It should be broken if it would cause harm to another person. If this would be the cause of doing the promise then it is important to break it. Also if doing the promise would break up a friendship then it shouldn't be done.

For these reasons I think that promises should always be kept unless the promise would affect somebody personally.

Comment: This composition, from Grade 10, takes the position that there are occasions when a promise should not be kept.

The issues of maturity and especially trust are well developed: even the breaking of an unimportant promise may permanently undermine trust.

The stronger case by far is made for keeping promises. The qualifying argument is underdeveloped and requires at least one concrete illustration. The conclusion is then - since almost any promise affects someone somehow - unhelpful to the reader in making any useful distinction. A more adequate development of the last two paragraphs would make this an excellent essay.

2. School Vacations

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 1 hour

Traditionally, Ontario schools have been closed for the months of July and August. At a time when a major occupation was farming this was necessary to allow young people to help on farms during harvesting.

This is no longer true. 'Such matters as changing leisure activity and vacation patterns, shrinking energy supplies, and the high cost of heating schools have led some people to suggest alternatives such as these: that the long vacation occur in the winter instead of the summer, or that the long vacation be split, for example, between January and July.

What is your position? Should the school vacation pattern stay much as it is now? Should the long vacation occur in another season? Should the long vacation be split up?

Write a composition of about three paragraphs, one -two pages, expressing your viewpoint on school vacations and giving your reasons. Take into consideration other viewpoints in developing your response.

School Vacations

I am strongly against the matter of school vacations changing to occur in the winter instead of the summer or being split, as an example, between July and January. I do not agree with these proposals because I feel they would not help the problems trying to be solved but only worsen them.

If the vacation were to be changed to the winter the schools would still have to be kept up. The heat in the schools would not just be able to be shut off. A certain amount of heat would have to remain in the school so equipment and other materials would not ruin from the cold. Janitors would still be needed to keep the schools clean, tidy and generally well kept up. In the summer time if schools were to be kept in, the students and teachers would not be able to perform their best in the heat of summer. Even in June some students find it too hot to be in school for the majority of the day. My solution to this problem is an air conditioning system which would also use a certain amount of energy and money. Having school in the summer would also take away a big part of the pupils recreation time since quite a few children are most active in this season. In the winter they would also probably not get the exercise they require if they were let out in then because of the cold, blizzards and other winter weather conditions.

If the other proposal of a split vacation in, perhaps July and January were to be confirmed, I feel the students would get less thoroughness in their studies. They would most likely forget what they were taught before July. After they returned to school in August they would have to review most of the work already taught. I feel the same after the January vacation. The work load, especially homework, is heavy enough without taking time out for reviews. I think the school vacation is just fine where it is.

Comment: An excellent, well organized treatment of the position "Leave school vacations as they are." The energy argument provided in the stimulus is countered with the cost of required air conditioning and the fact that one cannot shut off the heat entirely in winter.

The student notes (though the reader has to infer the conclusion) that two long breaks reduce learning efficiency more than does a single long(er) break. Several other good points are made, though the argument should have given attention, probably, to vacation - family time or summer employment.

School Vacations

Summer is traditionally a time for students to do pretty well want they want to do. Alot of teenagers get jobs, families often go on vacations, and some students, more or less, just laze around.

If school vacation was moved to a different time, there would be alot more students showing up for school and alot more students skipping classes. Ask anybody if they like to work in the summer and unless they work outdoors alot, they'll say no. Nobody likes to be cooped-up inside on a nice warm, sunny day, and students are more apt to just not bother showing up. Adults get paid to work; whereas, students would be told that they have no choice but to show up during the summer.

Out of all the students who work during the summer, alot of them work at things that require nice weather. Some works on farms, some may work at odd jobs, such as building things, painting houses, etc. If school vacation was moved to a different time, alot of these students may not get jobs.

Summer weather is usually hot and muggy. The classrooms are not air-conditioned and would get hot and sticky. The students would get very edgy and the teachers would get angry quicker. There would probably be alot more drop-outs.

As for splitting up the vacation, that would just cause alot of grumbling and there is not real reason for it. If you've ever noticed, whenever students return to school after a vacation, there is alot of revue. If we had two vacations, that would mean two revues which would waste both our time and the teachers time.

People tell us that these years are supposed to be the best of our lives! The only time we can really enjoy our selves is during summer vacation. Why take that away from us.

Comment: This, an above average treatment of the school vacations argument from the Grade 10 level, is weakened because it is somewhat "whiny" in tone.

Organization is much looser than in the former example, although pertinent arguments are brought to bear. In making his/her case, the writer has paid insufficient attention to the case for the alternative.

Some work is needed in mechanics and, particularly, effective sentence style.

School Vacations

School has traditionally taken place through the fall, winter and spring months, leaving summer as the yearly vacation time. This schedule might have originated to suit the learning habits of the students. It is often true that students forget most of what they had learned during the school year, while having their vacation. If the winter was divided for long holiday (perhaps during Christmas), the teachers would most likely have to start all over again, reviewing what they taught in October before continueing with their present material. To eliminate this problem, it is important that the school year stay as a whole.

As for the decision to change the vacation to the winter months, it is true that the school board could save money. They could close down the schools and turn off the heat, which on the whole would prove quite profitable to the board, but at the expense of the students.

Arranging for school in the summer would be a dreadful mistake. It is a proven fact (and I know that most teachers would vouch for this), that the students attention span and participation in class room situations, are very short during the hotter months. The children - and teenagers too, find themselves staring out class-room windows; anxious for the the school bell to sound. The warm climate seems to draw their thoughts out-doors. The opposite is true for the winter months. The students often prefer to stay inside. After the excitement of the first snowfall, the people usually return their full attention to the teacher.

Having the school year run through summer, would prove to be a handicap to the students learning. Since school was designed in the interest of the students, it is important that the school year be arranged to its full advantage.

The school year, as it is set up at this time, proves in my mind, to be the ideal school pattern.

Comment: This is a quite sophisticated composition with effective organization, style, and, particularly, diction.

The writer does attend, briefly, to the alternative position in the second paragraph.

The argument is chiefly focussed on learning efficiency issues and these arguments are well developed and sustained. The essay would benefit from additional supporting arguments.

Exposition - Process/Procedure

3. Earning One Hundred Dollars

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 1 hour

Most young people have, at one time or another, the opportunity to go on trips through clubs, school organizations or church groups. Many of these groups insist that the person going on such a trip must earn part of the money (not be given it by a relative).

Imagine that you are explaining to a fellow student who does not already have a part-time job an imaginative but practical way in which he or she could earn \$100 for the trip. If you wish, you may describe more than one method, but do not simply make a list. Explain in some detail how to go about earning the money and, perhaps, some problems to watch out for. Humour is welcome.

Earning One Hundred Dollars

To begin you should call your Globe and Mail office in your town or city and ask if there are any paper routes in your area. When you have found out, go to the Globe and Mail office and ask for your paper route number, your Globe and Mail bag and the collectors cards. Write down the name, address, and telephone number on the cards. Tell them your address and telephone number and the papers will be delivered to your home.

Each morning except for Sunday set your alarm for 6:30. When you are awake go to your front door and look to see if the papers are there. If they are carry them inside and cut the wire that holds them together. Begin counting out the number of papers you need to cover your whole route. Put them in your paper bag so that the folded side is facing upward.

Put on your outside clothes and begin delivering your papers to the houses on your route.

After you have been delivering papers for a week you should collect from them. Each customer should pay the same amount. When they have paid you give them a ticket to show that they have paid.

When you have collected from all of them a man from the Globe and Mail will come and give you a bill. You will pay the bill and keep the profits.

If you have any extra papers deduct them from the bill and give the man the extras. If you keep this up for 3 to 4 months and don't spend any of the profits you will earned your hundred dollars.

Comment: This composition is a very detailed outline of how to do one particular job. Unfortunately it is also very dry. The "Do this... then this..." imperative style has a machine-like effect, and should be moderated (perhaps an anecdote?).

The writing could be considerably improved by an effective introduction giving a little of the context for the advice and focussing attention on the recipient.

Stimulus #3 - Grade 8

Earning One Hundred Dollars

One day while coming home from school my friends Aldo and Andrew asked me if I knew a way to make a hundred dollars for their school trip. I told them to use several ideas to make the money. For instance, you could collect pop bottles, have sales, or if you have alot of old things you could have a yard sale. You could take all the money earned, put it together and see how much you have. If it still isn't enough you could have raffles or a lemonade and comic stand. Well if all failed you could turn to shoveling snow in the winter or to raking your next door neighbour's leaves. I would tell you guys that there are alot of ways of making money. It just goes to show you that not all things come easy, you have to work for them. Now you guys can go out and make your own money.

Comment: Occasionally this topic was twisted from exposition into narrative, as we see in the introduction of this example. The effect is poor, and the composition rapidly collapses into a mere list.

The decision concerning the writer's stance (to gab with friends and tell us about it) helps to entrap the writer into a register which is inappropriate for writing ("you guys") and repetition of "you could".

The writer needs to be led back to the stimulus and to try a new start with a clear audience in view.

Stimulus #3 - Grade 10

Earning One Hundred Dollars

A good place to start to earn 100 dollars is to apply at an employment agency or at different businesses in your area for a job. You can do odd jobs like shoveling driveways, in the winter, weeding a garden in the summer.

If you cannot find a job this way try asking a local farmer for a job until you raise your one hundred dollars. The summer is a good time to apply at a farm because people are looking for help during haying.

The best way I can think of raising your money is to baby-sit for people in your local area. Baby sitting usually pays one dollar an hour and people will ask you back again and spread the word to their neighbours and you will have jobs all the time.

Another good thing to do is to work out a deal with your parents. Make a deal where you get paid a certain sum for all jobs you do for them and therefore you earn your one hundred dollars without going out and doing jobs you don't want to.

You can sell things you no longer want and raise money that way. You may want to have a garage sale or sale where you are going to get all or some of the profits to pay for your trip.

Comment: While the composition is reasonably well organized the suggestions border on mere listing - a prevalent problem with this topic. The composition lacks an adequate conclusion, though the writer probably thinks reference back to "the trip" is sufficient.

Most of the suggestions are useful; the composition would have been better if several had been listed and one or two developed in more detail.

How to Earn One Hundred Dollars

How to earn one hundred dollars? That is what a lot of teenagers my age need. Usually people of my age do not have a job or a bank account with that much money. But sometime you will need a large sum of money, such as one hundred dollars, for a school trip or something to do with a trip. And since you have to earn it yourself, because your parents are too cheap to give you the money, you have to find some way to earn that money.

One way that I would suggest is to borrow your parents lawnmower and go out and mow lawns for people. You should charge them a dime per square foot. That way if find a very large lawn you only charge them a nickel per square foot. That way they think that they are getting a deal. But there is only one problem, it might be winter, so in that case, borrow a snowblower to make money for the trip.

Another way is to do odd jobs for people who are either too old or too busy. This time charge by the half hour. A good wage would be \$2.00 per half hour. A good way to convince people is to tell them you will bring your own tools. Do the best job you possibly can, in shortest time possible. After always thank the people for letting you do the work for them, and tell them that if they have any other work, to call upon you.

Comment: A quite satisfactory, well-organized composition in which the writer suggests several alternatives without falling into a mere listing.

We must assume, for lawn mowing, either that the student is weak in arithmetic or hopes the lawn's owner is. (A case for mathematics across the curriculum?)

The introduction is good, though a little long in proportion to the total essay. The conclusion offers excellent suggestions that create a fine ending. The style is consistent and suitably informal.

4. How to _____

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 50-60 minutes

Explain, as to a friend who doesn't know very much about the subject, either how to make something or to care for something.

What you are making might be a favourite recipe, some piece of clothing, a model, etc. In caring for something, you may consider a pet or an article such as a bicycle requiring careful maintenance.

Be sure to identify the resources or equipment required and lay out the steps clearly.

Slingshots

To make this weapon all is needed is: a metal clothshanger, black tape, wire cutters, 4 long skinny elastics, leather strip, vice grip, and scissors. Take the hanger and cut in places shown in the diagram. (diagram) Straitten out the large peice and bend into a shape, this is the frame Bend in jagged ends into loops Tape up the handle with the black tape Cut out of the leather a rectangle put a cut in each end , this is the pocket. Knot two of the elastics together to make one, do the same with the others. These are the slings. Attach the elastics to the pocket as shown in the diagram. Do the same with the other side. With the vice grip open loops just enough to slip the free end of the loop through, your sling shot is done, peas can be used for ammunitiion, but dont hit people or animals!

Comment: The best test of a "How to..." essay, is "Can you?" when you have read the instructions carefully. With this essay, one can. (The spaces indicate places where the student provided small diagrams which we have not attempted to reproduce.) The writing is certainly not distinguished, but it is clear and precise.

The concluding sentence (despite the sentence error) shows a sense of audience.

How to Ski Cross-Country

So you can't ski eh! Well Tom i'm gonna have ta tell ya how. First you bundle up warm. You put on normal socks, then some cross-country socks. If it's cold you put on some ski-pants to keep you warmer. Then you have to have an under-shirt, a sweater and then a jacket a toque and mits or gloves. So Tom what do you have on so far. Well i have normal socks, heavy socks, cross-country socks, ski-pants, under-shirt, sweater, jacket, mits or gloves but what about the skiis and stuff. Well you have to find some cross-country ski-trails that are not wrecked and you should go with a friend just in case you get injured. Also you have to get the right size skiis and ski-poles. To get the right size skiis you extend you arm straight up. Then stand the ski straight up and if it reaches your hand it's the right size. To get the poles stand them up and if they reach your armpits then there the right size. Then you put on the shoes. There just like running shoes but they have a little ridge. You put the little ridge in the binding and push forward. When it clicks in place it's on. To take them off you push the little circle and your shoe slides out. To move put your skiis in the trail slots and pretend your dragging your feet along the trail. It's really fun. HEY! Tom let's go skiing. You can use mine and I can use my moms. O.K. I'll see ya later. Dress warm

Comment: One cannot help enjoying this overly informal patter; the advice is clear, concise, and practical. The choice of dialogue, unfortunately, is the writer's ruin - stylistically and mechanically (paragraphing and quotation marks). There are many other flaws in mechanics as well.

Because there is a cocky freshness and the advice is so sound, the assessor is inclined to forgive. the flaws even if they cannot be ignored. With a little help, the student could turn this into a very effective composition.

How to Make Maple Syrup

Maple syrup is made from the sap of a hard maple tree. If you were to decide to make syrup, you would need to obtain several items. First you would need a half inch wood drill for tapping the holes into your trees. In these hole's you will put tree taps, which are small tin, plastic or iron spout which direct the sap from inside the tree into the sap bucket which is hanging outside the tree. These buckets are made of tin or plastic and are made in such a shape that the wind will not blow them away.

After this is done, on the first warm day, you will see liquid dripping from the spout. This liquid looks alot like water but it is sweeter. This liquid is collected at the end of every warm day and boiled immediately or within three days. This sap is put into a big pot and brought to a boil.

This should be done outside because when boiled inside the vaporized syrup will condense on your walls and cieling.

As the sap boils you will need to keep adding more sap, try to keep the pot from full to half full. After a while the sap will start to get darker and even later it will get thicker. At this point you should have thermometer because the boiling point will slowly rise. When the temp. is about 129 - 132 cel. the syrup can be cleaned and cooled and poured into clean jars. If you wish you may boil syrup longer and you will be able to make maple spread for toast and maple toffee or sugar then you may begin to enjoy pancake breakfasts with real syrup.

Comment: Many students tended to do quite well with this writing mode, as this composition illustrates. This student has done reasonably well with a quite complex subject.

Obviously, were the reader to go into the syrup business, more detail would be needed, but we do get a good sense of the process from the composition, and a fair amount of detail, some of it very specific, is given economically.

The conclusion, despite the sentence flaw, is engaging - and mouth watering!

The Art of Making a Skirt

Before I even begin to tell you how to make a skirt, we must get one thing straight! I am no expert at sewing, and am right now in the process of making my very first skirt. There are quite a few important things to be considered before even cutting one single thread.

Material must be selected, with colour, texture, and print, suitable for your figure type and colouring. Then, once this has been decided upon, thread, zipper, buttons, and any other notions you need for your article, should be bought all at the same time.

When you think you are finally ready to sew, carefully lay out your pattern on top of your material. Make sure that no two pieces overlap, and that any peices with a long arrow parallel to the side and pointing to the edge, is placed on the fold of the material. Pin the pattern to the material, with the pins going straight across the cutting line. When it is all laid out, then you can begin to cut and sew.

As long as every direction is followed, and no new "shortcuts" made, I suspect you will struggle through it, much the same way I am. A few words of warning: don't rush yourself, and don't get "scissor-happy!" Apart from that - enjoy yourself.

Comment: The delightful engagement of the reader and evidence of the writer's personality make this a most refreshing composition. There is style here that other students describing a clear, routine procedure could be encouraged to emulate.

The advice is well sequenced and very specific. There is sufficient sentence variety to avoid the "imperative" tone that often results from the use of verbs in the imperative mood.

Narrative - First Person (Real or Imaginary)

5. Why Does It Always Have To Be Me?

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 1-1¼ hours

Most of us at one time or another are put in a position where we feel we are the victim of circumstances.

Maybe you were all set for a party when you were cornered into babysitting instead, or perhaps an unexpected spot check caught you without your homework done, or perhaps something more unusual occurred to make you ask, "Why does it always have to be me?"

You are to write a story, of about a page or a page and a half, about a particular time when you felt this way. The story doesn't have to be completely true, but you are one of the main characters, you are telling the story.

You may want to begin by giving a little background to the incident, but keep it brief. Move quickly to the incident. Provide an outcome or conclusion to your story.

Goofed Again
or (Why does it have to be me)

Flip splash! Yuk!! Have you ever had one of those days when everything goes wrong? Well that happens all of my life, when Friday the 13 comes along I have good luck. Sometimes it isn't fair like just today a fall in a puddle and soaked my knees. In math if I turn around I get punched back by the guy be hind me.

My regular wrighting is horrenous my neat wrighting is only horrible. On my report card I got straight C's. I crack my nuckles at the wrong times. I wright this think in black ink and get back in blue. Everybody thinks I'm stupid when I'm really not. I feel like putting a hex on one of them. I have a friend who has a face that looks so heavy it might\fall off. My boots don't dry very quickly so I can't water proof them. Some people do not like me because they think I'm strange, actually they're strange.

It's always cloudy where I live.

But don't feel down on my account a person can get used to it, or at least I can.

Comment: As one scorer put it, "Maybe this deserves a low score, but I'd certainly like to teach him. He's got something!" He does, and it would be a pity to sign him off with another C (or D) and leave it at that.

The composition is an informal essay, and a clever one, rather than a narrative, with dry humour and a sense of style peeking through. The cryptic sentences are, in this instance, a strength rather than a weakness and the one-sentence paragraph a superb distillation of the thesis.

Why Does It Always Happen To Me?

There I was sitting in the living room watching television when all of a sudden there was a crash behind me. I looked back only to see a lamp in a thousand pieces and my brother sitting there smiling. My parents weren't home and I was left to watch him.

I then remembered what they said before they left. "We are holding you responsible if anything happens!" They had to say it in front of the thing that was supposed to be my darling little brother.

After I cleaned the mess up I got up and told my brother if he did anything else I would tell my mom where the supposedly eaten vegetables of my brother were hiding.

I was back watching T.V. and hoping my parents wouldn't notice where the brand new lamp was. An hour of peace and tranquility had gone by but to my horrors it didn't last long.

I started hearing a crunching sound. I ran into the kitchen only to find my brother and his friend trying to see who could get the most cornflakes in their mouths at one time. Then I made my brother pick every one of them up. Wouldn't you know it he had to pick them up one at a time. A half hour later he as finished and it was his bedtime.

Finally my parents came home but nothing escapes the naked eyes of parents. The first question that was screamed was "Where is my new lamp?" I calmly answered "I don't know" "Maybe it got took out with the trash!"

Comment: This composition exhibits the typical treatment of the topic - a straightforward narrative of a single occasion (in this instance perhaps a re-run of a favourite topic).

Organization is good with some touches of style - irony, the rhetorical question. The conclusion is satisfactory.

The writer has not quite caught the topic, "Why Does It Always...", which should produce some reflection and some personal engagement with the reader.

Why Does It Always Happen To Me?

Every year when fall finally comes around my friends and I all seem to get inflicted with hunting fever. Early in the season we all start organizing hunting parties, cancelling anything that stands in our way for every weekend during the oncoming fall.

Last year was no exception, as usual we all took turns having each other to our camps to hunt. The fifth Saturday into the season was to be my weekend to host our little band of hunters. As the weeks wore on each weekend was a flop there was always something going wrong and it always seemed to be happening to me. The first weekend, I brought the boat and motor. It worked fine taking us out but when we tried to come back it wouldn't start so we were left to row five miles back to camp. As things would have it, it started to look as though I was a jinx and would be kicked out of the group.

Finally my weekend to host the others came. This was going to be my chance to redeem myself. We left that Friday night and got in too late to do any hunting so instead we stayed inside and talked of all our hunting experiences. I seemed to prevail over the conversation telling everyone of the fabulous hunting adventures my father and I had shared.

At 5:00 a.m. the next morning I got up and decided to get the others up because we would have to get out early before the mist rose off the lake. I went down to the lake and prepared the boat before the others got outside. When I got to the lake I was amazed at the fog on the lake. However I had been on the lake before in the mist and found my way around alright so it did not worry me. When we got out on the lake things seemed alright for awhile until I realized we had been driving on a very small lake for a very long time. Then I looked down into the water and I noticed there were small waves coming in all around us. I couldn't believe it we had been driving in circles.

I then thought it would be too embarrassing to tell everyone what had happened so instead I just decided to use the moon as a guide and drive till I hit a shore. Finally we came to a shore and as I got out I thought I recognized the shore line but I wasn't sure.

So we just pulled up on shore and made ourselves a blind and decided to wait for the mist to rise. Then as the mist rose I began to realize where I was. We had been waiting on our neighbours backyard for the ducks to come in.

I had never felt so stupid how could I get lost on a lake 2 miles long by half a mile wide. This was my chance to reedeem myself and I blew it. Why does it always have to happen to me?

Comment: This is a far more (and better) elaborated example of the typical narrative treatment of the single incident which, like the preceding example, is likely a re-run of a favourite topic.

The opening phrases set the stage a little; the writer appears to be talking to us, and the last paragraph engages us (and the "always" in the topic) directly. A little more evidence that the story is one event in a series of the author's misfortunes would be welcome.

As the composition stands it is well organized as narrative rather than as illustration of the "thesis". As a story it is effectively organized and sequence is good.

Why Does It Always Happen To Me?

I have the same problem every week end. This problem never seems to end. On the week ends when I'm planning to go to a party. Something allways seems to come up. Like I have to baby sit or having to do some sort of work. The worst problem is baby sitting. That is because you have to spend the night watching television with a little kid. That drives you up the wall, and not getting paid for it. The next problem does not always come around so often. But when it does, there seems to be alot of it to do, that is work. By the time I get this work finished I'm so tired that I would not want to got out anyway.

So the teenage life is not so great. I think I'll tell this kid, I baby sitting so if you'r smart you'd prepare for this teenage life, for its not so great after all. But there is a good side of teenage life and thats if you look for and you will find it.

"So make the best of it."

Comment: The stimulus triggered a number of "railings" against fate. The first example was a very amusing "personal" version; this is really more general and therefore less effective.

There are a number of problems - sentence fragments, slang, faulty mechanics - the student needs to consider first in presenting this composition more effectively. However the writer's decision to advise his/her charge about teenage life is a very clever turn and deserves credit.

Also the writer appears to be conscious throughout of an audience, a strength not well exhibited in the previous two examples.

6. Seeing Ourselves

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 1-1½ hours

The Scottish poet Robbie Burns once wrote,

O wad some Pow'r the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!
It wad frae mony a blunder free us,
And foolish notion
(From "To a louse")

Freely translated, Burns feels that sometimes it would be very valuable to be able to see ourselves the way other people see us.

Recall an occasion where this "power" would have rescued you from some mistake or embarrassment. In a composition of 1-2 pages, briefly describe the occasion and its outcome, showing how that outcome might have been happier if you had been able to see yourself as others saw you.

Seeing Ourselves

Somewhere out on the street a clang of metal issued forth from a garbage pail. In the apartment below an old-fashioned kettle whistled plaintively. A gloomy light poured through my window.

"It'll probably rain again today," said my mother as she came in to see if I was awake.

"Sure," I replied automatically. Her brief comments were almost always the same. February is so boring.

Down at breakfast everyone was quiet, even John my little brother.

"You got a letter today," he said finally looking up at me with his big brown eyes.

"Really! From who?!. I nearly shouted, tingling with excitement.

My mother rose and left the kitchen, returning shortly with a rather large envelope.

"Here," she said, handing it across the table.

With shaking hands I opened the heavy envelope and out fell an elaborate valentine.

"Amour" was what it said and it was signed "Robert Smith".

I felt my face turning red in a fierce blush. I snatched the bundle and hurried to my room wondering if it was supposed to be a joke.

Later on the way to school I was startled by the sound of pounding footsteps.

"Wait up!," someone called.

I turned. It was Robert.

"How did you like your valentine?", he panted.

"Is this a joke?" I demanded, almost choking with indignation.

"Of course not!" Robert looked offended. "I think you're one of the nicest girls in the whole school and I wanted you to have it."

"It was nice of you Robert, but you really shouldn't have," I said lamely and wishing I'd gotten him one. "I have yours at home."

"I have to ask you something," he said reddening, "Will you go to the Valentine's dance with me?"

I was thrilled he'd asked me. Robert Smith was one of the most popular guys in the school. "I'd love to," I gasped.

After school I raced home to get some money to buy Robert a Valentine. The same phrase kept going through my head "If only I'd known."

Comment: It isn't at once clear how this composition fits the topic; it comes on the reader slowly. We tend to expect the writer to have pretensions which are demolished. This very sensitive writer holds a poor opinion of herself, one that, to her joy, is not shared by at least one other person.

As we look back, then, the details in the introduction are excellently suited to the writer's purpose - clang of metal, garbage pail, the plaintive whistle, rain: all contribute to the poor self restored.

A very delicate and sensitive piece of writing!

Seeing Ourselves

I was skiing with some friends of mine (trying to impress them and I didn't figure to watch where I was going but just to watch them and laugh when they would fall.

We came to a hill and I started to go down the hill. It was not a very high hill so I turned around to see how they were doing. Just then my legs started to spread further and further apart because the trail had made a turn and one ski went off the trail. I fell and hit a tree.

Comment: Many students wrote quite adequate narratives somewhat tangential to the stimulus provided. Though this composition certainly collapses as narrative, it does a better job than many in reflecting on the theme.

If the writer could be encouraged to expand the narrative portion and provide some dialogue or descriptive detail, the composition would be adequate.

Seeing Ourselves

Many teenage girls experiment with make-up. I find I wear my make up well but I have a bad tendency to inwardly criticize girls that exaggerate their cosmetics.

On one occasion, I related to my mother about a girl at school that wore her blush darkly streaked across her cheeks. She looked like a war-painted indian. In order to demonstrate to my mother the effect, I decided to put the blush on exactly the way this girl did.

It then occured to me that I might as well go all the way and exaggerate my eye and lip cosmetics too. I chose a bright green for my eyes, a scarlet red for my lips and a fuschia pink for my cheeks. I added a lot of mascara and completed my "Phyllis Diller look.

Then trying hard not to crack a smile, I promenaded proudly out of my room. I continued in my silliness until my mother burst laughing. As I was doing all this, my mother was doing the dishes. After her laughter (and mine) settled down, she told me to dry the dishes. I accepted and we continued to talk. The more the words came out of my mouth, the more I forgot about my appearance.

My mother then retired to her bedroom and I began reading a book. A neighbour who had just moved to my road and whom I endeavored to impress, knocked on my door. I opened the door with a cheerfull grin still inadvertently neglecting my appearance. He looked at me very strangely as though I was a freak but only inquired about borrowing the tire pump. I said, "Sure, You're welcomed to it" and retained my friendly smile. He uttered a "Thank you" and again looked at me oddly. He left with a shake of his head.

Pleased that I had been quite the nice neighbour, I proceeded to my bedroom and glanced at the mirror beside me. A bolt of panic paralysed me like a knife in the back. "Oh no!" I cried. "Look at me!" There I stood totally embarrassed and humiliated.

Comment: This composition illustrates what many students did in responding to the topic: the expansion of a single unusual incident - almost too literal and too unusual an occurrence of looking silly to bring the writer or the reader to any worthwhile reflection on Robbie Burns' insight.

All the same, it is a good story with excellent detail and good word choice. The characters come off the page well. Diction is unusually good.

Seeing Ourselves

If we could only see ourselves as others see us, I may have saved myself alot of embarrassment.

The day finally arrived. I was to audition for a major part in a musical production of "Anne of Green Gables." The choreographer for the play had called and asked our dance teacher for a few girls experienced in the areas of tap and jazz, and I was chosen.

So the morning of the audition I woke up, got dressed, grabed my dane clothes and was off.

When I arrived at the studio where I was to audition, I went straight to the changeroom and got changed.

Then it hit me like a ton of bricks. I was shaking. I realized what I was doing! I was auditioning for a part that was very important to me!

My friends who were also auditioning for other parts of the play had now arrived and we were all chattering like a group of old ladies at a church bazaar.

The choreographer entered the room, introducing herself, talked about the expectations they had for us and then progressed to teaching us the combination. After we learned the number, Bonnie, the choreographer, asked to see it in group of four or five.

My group finally was asked to show her the combination. I got up and did the number. There were no mirrors in the room but I knew I did it well.

When I was finished I walked over to my friends and told them how well I thought I did. I also stated that I was sure to be chosen.

The coreographer came back into the room and announced who was chosen.

"Kim _____, Carla _____, and Paula _____. I thank the rest of you very much for coming and I'm sorry I couldn't use you all."

I was stund. The words Bonnie spoke kept ringing in my ears. I wasn't upset because I didn't make it so much as the fact that had told everyone I was sure to be chosen.

If only we could see ourselves as others do, I would have realized that I wasn't as I thought I was and would have saved myself alot of embarassment.

Comment: The introduction and conclusion (weakened because of repetition of phrasing) do link the competition effectively to the topic, and the universal message is brought forward well through the narrative.

Organization is generally good, though some rather fragmentary paragraphs might well be combined.

A particular strength is the writer's openness with her reader - a mature touch. As she tells the story she is observing herself retrospectively.

This composition is a good example of the use of narrative to illustrate a theme or message.

Descriptive Narrative

7. Here I was, in the middle of _____

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 1 hour

Have you ever been in an unfamiliar place such as downtown in a large city, a large shopping plaza, or a bus, air, or train terminal where the bustle and crowds have made you feel confused and rather lost, wondering how you would find your way through the maze?

Imagine yourself in such a setting. Describe it, paying particular attention to how you feel.

Here is a suggested beginning. Start your composition differently if you wish, but begin with yourself in the setting.

Here I was, in the middle of _____
I wasn't sure where to turn next...

Your composition should be a page to a page and a half in length.

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions

1. For analytic scoring the following criterion will be found helpful.

Diction: Effective choice of words and imagery in establishing and sustaining the appropriate atmosphere and/or in conveying feelings. Avoidance of both the trite and flowery excess. Evidence of willingness to experiment with language.

- Adapted from Evans, Brown,
Marsh: Criteria Handbook,
p.9 and p.29

2. It is also useful to make a rough classification of the writing as to the balance between description of setting and narrator's feelings. The stimulus calls for both, but some students have trouble doing both.

Lost and Found

There he was, in the middle of the largest shopping plaza in Toronto. He wasn't sure where to turn next. Where was his mother? The little boy moved slowly over to the escalator and climbed on. Being shoved and pushed he gratefully got off on the of the second floor, and frantically looked about. Big round tears rolled down his gloomy face, from his sad blue eyes and he suddenly began to cry. Just after he finished crying, he hurriedly climbed the stairs, so he would not get trampled, to the third floor. Peering into everybody's face as they strolled by, he once again found himself wiping tears. He jumped on a wooden bench and stood up, but still no sight of his mother was to be found. Suddenly he jumped off the bench, and ran down the stairs, two at a time, tripping over his shoe-laces. No, he was mistaken that wasn't his mother. He ran up the stairs again, swallowing hard to hold back the tears. And still he ran up another flight of stairs, landing on the fourth floor. The tired, little, brown haired boy reached the top and buckled over in pain, from running so much. He knew he must rest. Within five minutes he had rested and decided that he had to find her. He stood up and started off, at a horses pace towards the stairs. He raced down to the bottom floor and returned to the place where he had first gotten lost. There she was. Running to her with his arms wide open he realized that he had not really been lost but just tired and confused. The boy ran to his mother. When he reached her, he grabbed her hand, with a grin a mile wide and soon they were out of the plaza walking to their car.

Comment: The narrative viewpoint is "officially" third person rather than first, and beyond that the writer is attempting, with some success, to get under the little boy's skin. With paragraphing and some editing of redundancies and over-writing ("his gloomy face", "he gratefully got off", "no sight... to be found") this would be a good piece of writing. We may be a little bored with stairs (and puzzled about how a young lad running down stairs two at a time tripping on shoelaces actually survived), but the writer achieves a sense of panic.

The writer is to be congratulated rather than criticized for his/her efforts to extend vocabulary.

This is good writing which, with coaching, could become very much better.

Union Station

Here I was, in the middle of Union Station. I wasn't sure where to turn next. I felt terribly ashamed. Ten years old and I get lost. Even the drunks here can find their way around. But me...I get lost. I saw an empty chair and decided to sit down and think it out. It soon came to me that all I had to do was ask for directions. I saw a lady with 3 children coming this way. I stopped her and said, "Can you give me directions?"

She looked up at me and said "Sorry, but you see, I'm in a rush."

I said that was all right and decided to go on my way. I was beginning to worry. I had only forty-five minutes to get my bus. Thank God parents always send kids out early when they are travelling alone. The people here seemed to undergo a change in my mind from caring people to inhuman robots. I hated everyone of them because they were bustling along towards their busses when I was lost. I walked back the way I thought the bus was. The signs were beginning to take different forms too now. From simply signs to what seemed like an evil creation. They seemed to sneer at me as I noticed they were the wrong sign. At that moment I hated everything my parents, the earth everything. Suddenly I noticed my gate! The bus I was taking was here. The world seemed to change again but back to normal. Suddenly I loved life and realized I had made it just in time to board the bus. Once on board I wondered how people who live alone survive when I can't be alone for one hour.

Comment: Apart from the writer's confusion of Union Station with a bus terminal, this is a good piece of writing. The reader expects more descriptive detail. Here the focus is almost entirely on feeling. The feelings expressed are somewhat extreme - hatred mixed with anxiety and "love of life" with relief.

The personification of the signs (incipient paranoia as well as panic?) and conclusion are excellent touches.

An Experience to Remember

Here I was, in the middle of Toronto airport all by myself ready to fly home alone for the first time. I wasn't sure where to turn next. I had just previously come from Mexico City the night before with a gymnastic team of five other girls, two coaches and two judges.

That night I stayed at one of the gymnasts house. I woke early the next morning ready and more than eager to get home to see my family again. We reached the airport in about forty minutes. They dropped me off just outside the large doors, we said our good-bye's and away they went. I was quite exhausted from my big trip yet still very wide eyed and open eared to all the surroundings. I could see people rushing by me and I was all so baffled by the mass confusion. I began to look around for the gate area where I would board the plane back to Sault Ste. Marie.

I was more than lost in the huge airport and asked for directions many times. Although I had been in much larger airports before, I had never been on my own. Finally I reached the lounge area. I hadn't relaxed for five minutes before I could feel the rumbling of my sore stomach. As well as being excited and frightened I was also very hungry since I had not eaten yet that day. I spotted a small cafeteria style shop nearby, picked up my luggage and went to eat a little something. I guess I had been to interested in what I was eating to have heard the first and maybe even second flight call to Sault Ste. Marie. So time went on and I was feeling much more stable when I heard "last call for flight 803 to Sault Ste. Marie. I picked up everything and just ran. I was the last to board and almost missed it, but from then on it got all so much easier. I made it through the day.

Comment: Despite a slow and awkward start this is a reasonably good narrative. Descriptive detail is lacking; the writer could focus more on the sequence of events. Here the emphasis is on feeling.

The composition would benefit greatly from some detail of the sights and sounds that produced the "mass confusion" and bafflement.

The Airport

Here I was, in the middle of Houston International Airport, the world's busiest. Where was I to go? I wasn't sure where to turn next. I felt butterflies in my stomach.

At least I wasn't the only one who looked lost. A mother with her child kept nervously looking up and down the hall as if she didn't know where to go. Then came a man with a brown hat. He must have walked back and forth about six or seven times. The crowd was so big that people walked shoulder to shoulder. It must have been the biggest building in the world. The end of the hall looked a mile off.

Some people just sat in a waiting chair and read or slept. That is, if they could find an empty seat. The ones that did were the lucky ones. A man was having an argument, with the custom's people, about a package he had. He looked like a nice person and I felt sorry for him.

The noise in the place could deafen you. Children crying, carts rolling down the hall and people talking. Every couple of minutes a flight was called. It said to go to a certain departure gate. Some help that was! I tried for an half a hour to find the right gate. Finally I did.

Comment: Sentence structure is frequently ineffective and the conclusion rather limp, but the composition is especially strong in descriptive detail. Though the narrator does not concentrate on feelings, they can readily be inferred.

Some of the details sound amazingly like Terminal 2 in Toronto!

8. The Great Snowball Fight

Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 40 minutes

The Great Snowball Fight

The day dawned mild, grey, and almost completely calm - the perfect day for battle. The snow was packing perfectly.

The Melinda Street Mob had established its claim to Scrubwood Hill, and the fortress of hard-packed snow constructed late the evening before. By nine o'clock the troops had gathered and by half-past ammunition stocks had been created and distributed. Meanwhile, the Warwick Court Warriors were surveying the hillside for vantage points and arming themselves with snowballs, too.

Ten o'clock was approaching; the captains met on the hillside to review the rules, and everyone moved to stations. The red flag swept down. "Charge!" cried Nancy, and the battle was on. ...

Using the above paragraphs as your opening, complete the story of "The Great Snowball Fight". You are an observer at this battle, rather than a participant. Describe what happens once the battle begins. Don't recopy the introduction. Start where it leaves off.

Note to the teacher:

You may change the stimulus to make the writer a participant rather than a reporter or observer. A modest change such as "Meanwhile, the Warwick Court Warriors, of which I was a charter member, were surveying..." would accomplish that.

The stimulus was pre-tested only in the third person.

Additional scoring suggestions:

1. For analytic scoring, the following criterion will be found helpful:

Diction: A good sense for the sounds and rhythms of language. Attention to action verbs. Economy and precision of descriptive detail and imagery.

- Adapted from Evans, Brown, Marsh: Criteria Handbook, p.29

2. It is also useful to make some classification of viewpoint: consistently observer? consistently participant? or mixed? This will assist in reviewing subsequently with students the effective sustaining of viewpoint.

The Great Snowball Fight

"Charge!" cried Nancy, and the battle was on. George the head of the Warwick Court Warriors, quickly zapped snowballs of ice at the Melinda street Mob. Nancy screamed orders to her loosing troops. "Fire you guys, hurry, they're winning." George cheered to his Warriors with a big grin on his face "Come on troops, We're doing good! We'll win."

Nancy's fortress started to tumble down around them and troop 5 was assigned to fixing it. The battle raged on. Snowballs were whipped against the tiny cabin on the hill. The mob was loosing. At half past ten, the Warriors started running out of ammunition.

George commanded, "Troop 3, go out and look for some more snow for ammunition."

Troop 3 obeyingly ran out into the open battle field and got bombed with large hard snowballs. They gathered as much ammunition as possible and headed back down the hill to their fortress. When they arrived, there was not a person in sight. George and the rest of the Warwick Court Warriors had chickened out and left. Nancy and her Mob came racing dow to troop 3 of the warriors. Danny, a member of this troop, pointed to the charging enemies and screamed. Him and the rest of troop 3 raced away as fast as possible. Nancy and her Mob after they had won, screamed their joy of Victory to the world "The Warriors are chickens, and we, the mob, won." Then, they all pounced on their enemies cabin and tore it apart. Then they started to go home to celebrate victory.

On the way they passed the old Mantly mansion. Nancy stopped

"You know," she began, "We havent ever been in there before. Ya wanna explore it?"

The rest of the Mob agreed so the started into the mansion.

All of a sudden, the Warriors ran into the house and carried Nancy out. The rest of the Mob ran out and were bombed with snowballs. Nancy was pulled down and felt her face being covered with snow. She squirmed and wiggled but couldn't get loose. The snow was in her mouth and it was hard to breath.

"You cheater George," she managed to sputter through breaths.

She heard running footsteps and felt herself being lifted off of the snow.

"Are you OK Nancy?" Linda, her best friend asked.

"Oh yah!" she answered "I just don't understand why those guys have to ambush us after we won fair and square!"

"Don't worry," Linda spoke sneekily. "We chased them away but we'll get them back tomorrow. We'll get them really good!"

Comment: The writer shows an excellent narrative sense, having captured colloquial speech well and mastered the conventions of dialogue. The extension of the colloquial into the description may be perceived as a weakness by some assessors, but it has consistency. Descriptive detail is good.

The Great Snowball Fight

John, the leader of the Melinda Street Mob threw the first snowball, it hit Nancy, the leader of the Warwick Court Warriors. Soon, snowballs were flying everywhere, splattering on the faces of everyone. But! It was not long before everyone was cold, wet, tired and out of ammunition stocks. One problem still remained for the Warwick Court Warriors, They hadn't yet been able to get anywhere near the fortress on Scrubwood Hill. If they could find enough strength to build up their ammunition stocks again, before the Melinda Mob did they would still have a chance of defeating them. Soon, Nancy and her Warriors were ready to continue the fight and begin invading the fortress. The Melinda Street Mob was not prepared for this second, sudden attack and were forced to retreat from the fortress. The Warwick Court Warriors were ecstatic they had won the snow fortress, they had beaten the undefeatable Melinda Street Mob for the first time. They cheered their victory while the Melinda Street Mob began making their plans for another attack..

Comment: With effective paragraphing this description would read very well. It is an example of effective treatment without the use of dialogue. While there are some sentence flaws, generally sentence style is varied and effective. Word choice is good and narrative viewpoint consistently maintained.

The Great Snowball Fight

I started to charge down the hill and I had already tripped two times. The second time I tripped, I knocked down Tim and he was mad. I told him I was sorry and that I didn't mean it, he then accepted my apology and we went back to the snowball fight.

The kids from the other side of the hill were starting to get carried away. They would make a snowball and dip it in a mud puddle to make it hard. I heard a swish go past my head just skinning my ear. I looked behind me and sure enough, it was an ice ball. I was getting very angry now, we were out here to have fun and the other kids were out here to fight. I picked some snow, quished it together like the way my mom makes meat balls. I was so mad and steamed up, that I thought the snow was melting through my mittens. I dipped the snowball in water, then packed it again till it was nice and hard.

I was picturing myself as a big league baseball player getting ready to pitch the ball to the player at bat. I wound my arm up and pushed my hat down to my eye brows.

Tim came over to me and said that he was getting mad too. I told him my plan and we both had an ice ball in our hand. I'll count to 3 and then we'll shoot together. Time counted softly, "1, 2, 3." Those ice balls let off like a speeding bullet. I hit one of the guys in the leg, and Tim hit the big shot in the back.

Everything was still, nobody moved. The red flag went down, and Nancy gave out one big shout. "Tim's team is the winner.

The opposite team just stood there staring at us. They walked away with the biggest frown on there face, that I thought that they were going to trip over there bottom lip.

Every year we always had a snowball and the same team won over and over again each year, until now. The Great Snowball fight was over.

Comment: Some students chose to be participants rather than observers (first person rather than third); this is an effectively written example, enriched particularly by imaginative touches ("the way my mom makes meatballs", the baseball player comparison, tripping over bottom lip) and some good word choices.

Having made him/herself the centre of the story, the writer perhaps focusses too long on the ice balls to the neglect of the general trend of the battle. Nevertheless, the story moves along well.

The Great Snowball Fight

Snowballs flew accross the battlefield exploding against the fort walls. Soldiers ran heavily armed, ready to shoot, searching for the enemy.

The anguish on his face was easily seen. In his last effort he managed to pull the snowball out of his ribs and drop to the ground and die.

Many forts from each side had been overrun. Out of the three forts that the warriors left in retriect, one proved to be a very strategic position for the mob.

By ten thirty the casualty report had risen to an astonishing high. It was time for someone to make a move. The warriors had a base at the bottom of Scrubwood hill and the mob remembered that they had confescated an enemy fort at the top of the hill. The leaders of the mob were deviously planning the greatest military operation in Scrubwood Hill history.

The plan worked in two phases. First the warriors had to be leurered away from the hill to cause the leaders of the warriors to return to the base. With all of the enemy leaders in one place, it would be easy to wipe them out. (One of the battle rules was that when the leaders died the battle was over). The second phase consisted of making a gigantic bomb (snowball) on the other side of the hill and bombing the enemy to bits with it. The plan was perfect.

The warriors had no idea that they were so vunerable. But, they had secretly planted a traitor with the mob.

The bomb was ready and the signal was given for it to be firedl Just then John the traitor, dashed down the hill into the enemy fort. Surprised, all of the enemy leaders ran out of the fort bewildered by John's words. They hesitated, looked up at the large mass of enemy soldiers at the top of the hill, and were swallowed by the bomb. The bombs dropped on Japan had no effect compared to the devastation compared by this bomb.

The whole warrior management was crushed and the mob were victorious. The only thing to do know was to put the traitor before the firing squad.

Ready, aim, fire!!! The traitor layed there pulverized. What a day?!

Comment: The analogy with a real war is very well sustained, and the writer has introduced an interesting twist - the traitor. The observer viewpoint is held consistently, and there is genuine skill applied to sentence style: note the use of short sentences in paragraph 5.

The writer has made a point of reaching for the exact word (anguish, confiscated, deviously, vulnerable, bewildered...) accepting the misspelling risk. The teacher must be careful to award credit for diction and not "put down" because of spelling errors the student who is willing to take the chance.

Friendly Letter

9. Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 30 minutes

You are on your way from Thunder Bay to spend a weekend with a close friend who lives in Windsor. Your plane lands in Toronto. You have an hour before the flight to Windsor, so you decide to take a short walk around the airport. You pass by a store just as it is being robbed. The robbers escape and, to your surprise, several people rush out of the store and accuse you of being one of the robbers. You are arrested and taken to jail.\

The following day your innocence is proved, and you return home. Write a letter to your friend in Windsor telling what happened and how you felt about it all. Don't trap yourself with an elaborate description of the robbery. Start just following the robbery.

Include your address and the date as for a friendly letter.

Note to the teachers on Additional scoring suggestions (Letters):

For this and the following letters (#10, 11, and 12) a scale of 1-8 is advised, if holistic scoring is employed. Holistic or analytic scoring should be employed for the body of the letter only, with form scored separately, on a 0-3 scale:

Form complete and correct except minor punctuation	- 3
Not quite complete or several punctuation problems	- 2
Incomplete or incorrect	- 1
Missing	- 0

Thunder Bay letter:

As for stimulus #7, it is valuable to classify responses as to balance between feeling and, here, narration. The stimulus calls for both, but students have a penchant for the narrative to the exclusion of feeling.

Note: Address and name have been deleted from the sample letters in order to preserve student anonymity.

Comments, therefore, are on the body of the letter only.

Dear Marie:

Sorry I didn't show up at your house last monday. Why didn't I? I don't like to think about it but I'll tell you anyway. I was at the Toronto airport waiting for my plane. I had an hour so I decided to look around. I passed one store and a croud of people rushed out toward me. They accused me of robbing the store. I was so angry. It was very upsetting expecially when I knew I did absolutely nothing wrong. When they hauled me off to jail I almost died.

The next day I was proven innocent. I'd like to get my hands on the people who really did rob that store.

When I arrived home I was so relieved. Wouldn't you be?

I'll probably be going to your house next week and I hope I don't get into trouble again.

Your friend,

Comment: This is generally an effective personal letter with suitable informality of style. Certainly there is attention to feeling - "almost died," "I'd like to get my hands on...," "so relieved."

The writer, however, has not described experiences following the robbery. Some detail is required there. The letter in its beginning and conclusion supplies the appropriate linkages to the receiver: cancelled visit and renewal.

Dear Richard:

How are you? I'm fine. I'm sorry that I didn't make it for the weekend, but you'll never guess what happened to me. I had a safe flight to Toronto the only problem was I had to wait an hour before my flight. So I decided to take a short walk around the airport. I walked passed this store. The store was being robbed, to bad the robbers escaped. The owners and some of the customers accused me of being one of the robbers. They went into the store and called the police. When the police came they told me to remain silence they brought me to the police station. They brought me in a little room and asked me some questions. I told them I was innocent but they didn't believe me. They put me in a jail sell. They allowed me to take one telephone call. I called my lawyer. He arrived shortly and asked me some questions. He said I have to spent the night there. I had to stay in this filthy jail. The next day I brought in court and I was proved innocent thank God. I am writing this letter from home not in jail. So I hoping I will get another weekend off from work. Please write.

Sincerely

Comment: Despite the many flaws in this letter, the student has attended to the stimulus and provided some details of events following the robbery. Some details - (e.g. "I called my [I keep one on hand in every city] lawyer") - are improbable. There is some attention to feelings: attitude to robbers' escape, "filthy jail", "thank God" and a touch of humour - letter from home rather than jail.

Dear Amber:

I'm sorry I was not able to go and see you last weekend. I tried, really I did! I even got all the way to Toronto!

When my plane landed there, I decided to go and buy a few magazines for my flight to Windsor.

As I walked up to the store, three people wearing black leather jackets and nylon stockings over their heads ran out of it. I started running toward the store to find out what had happened. A crowd, led by a middle-aged, heavy-set blonde woman, came out a few seconds after the robbers. The woman pointed a stubby finger at me and cried out, "There's one of them! Get her, somebody!"

I almost fainted with shock when an airport security guard grabbed my arm and pulled me toward a phone booth where he called the police.

By the time the police got there, quite a large crowd had gathered. My face was flaming, and I was feeling embarrassed until another woman remarked, "It serves her right." Then I started feeling angry. I wasn't the thief!

When everything was cleared up, I received an official apology and another plane ticket paid for by the shop-owner. See you next weekend! This time, I'll stay on the plane!

Comment: This is a superior letter with an excellent, well sustained informal style.

There is some descriptive detail and attention to the writer's feelings. The conclusion is particularly effective.

Dear Mary-Lou,

I guess your wondering what happened to me. Well it was really frightening. I got on the plane yesterday, here in Thunder Bay. We were airborne and flying along nicely, then we had to stop in Toronto before going on to Windsor. I got off the plane and decided to take a short walke around the airport. I passed by a store as it was being robbed. We all stepped back into hiding. The robbers ran out of the store and I ran out of my hiding to see what was going on. The next thing I know there were two security guards holding my arms telling me I was under arrest for robbing the store.

They took me to jail and I spent the night there. In the morning they realized I was not guilty and apologized, and paid for my plane fare back home.

Acutally it was kind of exciting too.

Your Freind Always,

Comment: This is a satisfactory letter, although lacking in detail about events subsequent to the robbery. As well, there ought to be more attention to feeling, though the balance between the opening "frightening" and the conclusion "exciting" is good.

10. Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 30 minutes

You spent last weekend at the home of a family friend where you helped clean the storage room or attic. While cleaning, you discovered something that surprised and interested you. It might have been a picture, an antique, an old toy, a piece of clothing. Use your imagination!

Write a letter to a personal friend about your own age, describing what you found, why you found it interesting, and how you think it came to be in the storage room or attic. There may be a story behind the article. Be sure to include your thoughts (or the story) about why it is there.

Include your address and the date as for a friendly letter.

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:-

It will be of value to classify responses. Does the letter restrict itself to an account of the finding and description of the item or does it extend to include speculation?

It may also be of interest to tabulate numbers where speculation extends to fantasy or introduction of the supernatural.

Dear Lisa,

Last Saturday while cleaning my friend, Vicky's, attic we came across her great, great grandmother's diary. Curiosity swept us over as we dared to reveal the mystifying world that is trapped in its cracking cover.

As we skimmed the pages we found clippings dating to 1809. There were interesting articles, to my surprise, about the electronic break through, the television!

I found the diary very interesting because it made my mind wander and realize just how advanced we are in technology and how our society has expanded like a giant cake in an oven. I never really thought that people of the late 1800's really existed but now it is as if I knew her personally and shared with her her most deepest and intimate feelings.

I think that after a while she didn't think an old diary with a few touching moments was very interesting and buried it under some old books and photos but I think it is the most valueable thing I've ever seen and I indulged myself in its fraying interior.

The intrigue that lingered in its very pages will be remembered by me for a long time. The fraternal feelings that was in that family taught me an interesting lesson about my future feuding with my siblings.

Your friend,

Comment Though the letter lacks linkage to its imagined receiver, it is otherwise well ordered and paragraphed. There is descriptive detail, and a good deal of interesting reflection and comment. Some may consider the letter to be over-written and the style somewhat stilted. There is, however, an attempt to use interesting words and to extend the vocabulary range.

Dear Judy!

How are ya? fine I hope. I'm alright. As you know I spent last week-end at a friend's house. While I stayed there we cleaned the attic, and we came across this really cute stuffed dragon. They were really surprised to see it because they couldn't figure out how it got there. So they didn't really care and brought it down stairs.

I thought it was really interesting though because at times you'd be sitting there and it seemed to move. I never mentioned it to my friend though because she would probably think I was stupid or something. So I just figured it was my eyes and made nothing more of it.

He was really cute though he had light green eyes that seemed to sparkle, his body was dark green with a light green belly, he had three toes.

As you know they have a little baby which is only four months old. When she saw the dragon she wanted it right away. She clung to that thing like glue, she never left it's side all week-end and if some one did take it from her she cried my friend phoned me last night and said that her sister still has the dragon. Well not much more to say so I'll close for now your friend always.

Yours Truly
your friend

Comment: In contrast to the preceding example, we present the other extreme: informality that approaches the banal ("really cute", "I figured"). One may argue, perhaps correctly, that this is what letters to friends at this age are really like; the art of teaching is to encourage the "just right" balance.

The letter begins and ends with reference to the receiver. Descriptive detail is good.

Stimulus #10 - Grade 10

Dear Ken,

I received your last letter about a week ago and found it very interesting. It was nice to hear about your family and all of my old friends.

I just recently helped my next door neighbour clean out her attic, you would have been amazed at what we found. The attic was dusty and creepy just like in the movies, and it was full of old trunks. I opened one of the trunks and do you know what I found? Tons and tons of clothing, just like those back in the old days. There was everything from socks to hats in assortment of colors and designs.

My next door neighbour told me that her great great grandmother saved everything that was passed down to her, and she passed it down through the families. You see some where along the line one of her relatives was a seamstress and was facinated by clothes and what you could do with them, so they could just kept on adding to the collection.

Some where along the line they stopped and the clothes were forgotten about and now Cathy, my next door neighbour says she will start adding to it once again.

Enough about the attic. What have you been doing lately? Nothing exciting has been happening here, so I guess I will close and wait for a letter from you. I really miss you alot. Say hi to everyone there for me.

Comment: An excellent letter on all criteria for structure and content (except that one wishes the writer had singled out and described one unusual piece of clothing in particular). An effective informal style is well sustained, and linkage to the reader is provided in both introduction and conclusion.

Dear John:

How have you been? I was at Karen _____ home the other night, she asked me over to help her out with a few tidying jobs in her attic. She said she was to frightened to go up all by herself at night and she doesn't have time to do anything in the day because she's working so I said I'd go help her out.

We found alot of old things. I was cleaning out some trunks while Karen cleaned out and sorted boxes of clothes. She found a box with alot of clothes in it that fit her and she decided to take it downstairs. I said I'd stay and keep sorting out the junk in the trunks. There were alot of ornaments and objects carved out of different things.

I was going through the last \trunk which I had found under some sheet way back in the corner. I opened it up and in it I found a bunch of different dolls. These dolls were different from most, the faces on them seemed almost alive. They had features and expressions of real live people. As I came to the bottom of the trunk I got a big shock. I picked ou the doll and stared at it. Then it came to me, the doll looked exactly like Karen's Grandfather. It even wore the same type of clothing. What shocked me even more was that stuck all through the doll was pins. A while ago, when Karen's grandfather died I heard a story that a gypsy lady had murdered him by sticking knives in him, this would explain the doll. At the time I only thought it was a fairy tale.

I didn't say anything to Karen, I just put it into a paper bag and packed it back into the bottom of the trunk. I think it was meant to be hid, Karen never mentioned it so I never said anything either.

Time for me to sign off now, write back to me soon.

Your friend,

Comment: This provides a particularly good example of letters that hinted at the mysterious or supernatural, with a very successful build up and resolution.

The letter, as well, is properly organized with linkage to the receiver in both introduction and conclusion. Some attention to sentence punctuation and division would make this a superior piece of work.

Letter of Application

11. Grades: 7-10

Suggested time: 30 minutes

A local radio station is running a contest to select five teenagers to appear on a popular evening music program. Each winner will be allowed to plan, and act as the DJ, for a half-hour section of the program. This half-hour will include jokes, stories and music.

You would like to be one of the winners. Write a letter to the contest judges telling why you would be a good disc-jockey.

You are to send the letter to "Sharkey" at Radio Station CBXY, P.O. Box 500 in your home town.

Give the proper addresses, date, etc. as in any formal letter.

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:

Appraisal of the letter of application should focus particularly on content. Some points will be unique to the stimulus, but the following, possibly on a 0-2 scale, will be helpful for both.

1. Establishment of qualifications:

Relevant, and in some detail	- 2
Some noted only	- 1
Barely mentioned	- 0

2. Writer's personality (character, interests): How effectively does this come through?

Well:	an engaging personality	- 2
Somewhat:	relevant interests, personal characteristics mentioned	- 1
No: (or a vague generalization		- 0

Stimulus #11 - Grade 8

LETTERS OF APPLICATION (Stimulus #11 and #12)
In order to preserve student anonymity the addresses and closings have been omitted from the sample letters. Comments concern the body of the letter only.

Dear Sir,

I am a well educated student. I have attained my grade 7 and am presently attending grade 8. I have been trained in areas such as, typing, mathematics, english, etc. The reason I wish to try for this job is because it is a good prospect in order to earn money to further my educating skills to become a teacher. I am very interested in music because it is a form of human art and feelings that the writer puts on paper. I share the same feelings because I myself am in a rock band. I think that a disc-jockey should be open to his listeners like sharky is. I think that this could be a great learning experience for me if I do decide to become a radio broadcaster. Music is the international lagnuage and I wish to express the feelings I have about music along with a lot crazy jokes along the line. I hope that you make the right decision about the 5 people who will earn the right to work for you. I know it will be the correct decision. Happy choosing.

Cordially,

Comment: With paragraphing, this letter would be at least satisfactory. The student has made a good, if only partly successful, try at a fresh ending. An appropriate introduction (linkage to the advertisement) is lacking.

The writer has tried, too hard it appears, to exhibit a personality which is thoughtful and reflective. The consequence is some meaningless padding ("to further my educating skills") and pretentiousness.

Dear Sirs;

I have heard about your contest on the radio and in the newspaper. I think I am qualified for this job because I have a convincing and good voice. I have been at many dances and no what interests young and old people. I will be willing to take orders from higher personnal with out complaints.

I would try my best to please the listeners in the half hour time alot if I win.

Please do consider my application thoughtfully.

Sincerely
 \

Comment: This letter, though it meets most of the requirements (link to the advertisement, qualifications, conclusion), is too brief. We need more information about the writer. Personality is poorly reflected because of the brevity and because of stiltedness or awkwardness of phrasing. Sentence #2 is particularly poor; it sounds arrogant though surely the student does not intend the effect.

Dear Sirs,

I am writing this letter in reference to the position open for a D.J. for a half hour contest.

I would like very much to fill that position. I am sixteen years old and I am interested in D.J.'s and their work.

I have up to grade ten English. I have taken vocal lessons for two years and I have also appeared on television once.

I am interested in making people laugh, and I enjoy telling stories.

I know most of the top forty music and know what it takes for people to listen to a program for any length of time.

I would be very honoured to work on your show. Now I would like to thank you for considering my application.

Yours truly,

Comment: The ingredients of a complete letter of application are here and properly ordered. The letter is linked (imprecisely) to the advertisement. The weaknesses are the fragmentary paragraphing and the stiltedness of phrasing, especially in the conclusion. The stiltedness (something "learned" that needs to be "unlearned") undermines the writer's effort to convey something of his/her personality.

Deàr Sharkey:

I was delighted to hear about an opportunity, finally, to be able to entertain people. Your add in Saturday's Erewhom Advertiser really caught my eye and I would like a chance to be one of the lucky teenagers.

I listen to you, Sharkey, and sometimes even imitate you. I have always loved people and usually I make them laugh. At home I have puppets to practice my ventriliquism. The several plays I have been in, have helped me the audiences. Someday I hope to be a Disc Jockey and this may further my career.

Enclosed please find my resume. I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Yours truly,

Comment: In one class where this stimulus was tried, students wrote full resumé's to accompany the letter. We have not included the resumé. Teachers who teach the resumé or c.v. may wish to add this to the assignment and score it separately.

An engagingly frank opening sentence and linkage to the advertisement. Relevant and imaginative qualifications are identified. Personality comes through. Only the concluding sentence is rather trite. Organization and paragraphing are good.

12. Grades: 9-10

Suggested time: 30 minutes

A local newspaper is planning a feature page for teenagers. It is to contain several columns of interest to various groups and ages. The columns may be about a particular topic (eg. stamp collecting, sports) or of general interest (teen news, fashions, advice). Each columnist selected will be paid according to the amount of copy accepted and columns will appear each week for three weeks.

You would like to be chosen as one of the columnists. Write a letter to the editor telling what type of column you propose to write and why you would be a good choice as a columnist.

You are to send the letter to the Editor of Teen Daze at The Post and Packet, Box 1000 in your home town.

Give the proper addresses, date, etc. as in any formal letter.

Note to Teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:

See Stimulus #11.

Stimulus #12 - Grade 8

Dear Sir:

I am writing to apply for a job as a columnist for your newspaper. I propose to write a column for giving advice to all the teenagers who need advice about drugs or their parents. I would be a very good columnist because I have the ability to say what I want to say, specifically.

I have had many experiences with the Shoppers News, and I have worked for Saints as a secretary.

Here are some references to go by if you want proof:

Mr. John Doe,
Manager, Shoppers News,
949-1489.

Mrs. Jane Doe,
Boss, Saits,
949-9460

I will be glad to have an interview with you at your time and place.

Sincerely yours,

Comment: This letter, meets the requirements in terms of organization and content; the "basics" are there. The student obviously needs help in presenting his/her personality more effectively (e.g. "if you want some proof"). And phrases such as "what I want to say", "I have had many experiences" need clarification. What has the writer to say? What kinds of experiences?

Stimulus #12 - Grade 8

Dear Sir:

I am sending this letter to notify you that I am extremely interested in being chosen to be one of the columnists for your feature page in The Post and Packet.

My topic would be advice to questioning teen-agers.

I hope you will consider my application, for I remain:

Yours Truly,

Comment: This letter is a minimum response, lacking any references or evidence of qualifications. No personality peeps through. It might be a useful example for teachers to use in introducing the business letter. The paragraphing and form are there. Students can be asked "What is lacking?"

Stimulus #12 - Grade 10

Dear Editor:

My name is Jane Doe. I recently read in the newspaper that columnists are required for a feature page for teenagers.

I believe that I am qualified to be chosen as one of the columnists. No newspaper is complete without a sports section. I enjoy all types of sports and regularly attend high school games to support the teams. I am ambitious and would very much enjoy the challenge of being a sports writer. I presently write for our school newspaper.

Enclosed is my personal resume which includes my qualifications as well as how I can be contacted. I am looking forward to hearing from you. \

Sincerely,

Comment: An excellent resumé with references to specific sports was attached to this letter.

Without the resumé this letter may be too brief. It is, however, complete and appropriately paragraphed. Paragraph two is engaging and the personality of the writer comes through clearly. "Personality" is effectively balanced by the business-like tone.

Response to a Poem

13. Grades: 8-10

Suggested time: 30 minutes (for writing assignment only).

To the teacher: This writing assignment should be introduced by a study of the two poems with some class discussion of the question that follows.

The discussion should focus on the poets' feelings - not on form or style. When students have shared reflections, turn to the feelings of the blind man and the old woman. Ask the students to step into the roles of the blind man and the old woman, and then give the writing assignment without further discussion.

Blind Man on the Subway

What's really most painful
is that being helpless
he must turn to us: I can't see
how he'd have any faith
in us keeping him from harm,
not neglecting him -

and in case he has,
the way we let him bump his face
getting on the car
(no one helps him much)
should clear him up for good:

but when he sits down
there's that look on his face
the blind have-a certain
serenity, a calm,
that may be only a mask
(but who can be sure?)-
that troubles me
all the way home

that should trouble us all.

RAYMOND SOUSTER

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Untitled

That plastic coat couldn't keep out much of the cold
She was shivering as she walked.
To each step went a cacophony of brittle bones.
Rattling and tumbling in the waxy skin
Blue veins showing age
Blue hands showing wear
Blue eyes showing pain.
Red lids; the only natural colour about her.
All the world in a paper bag, clutched tightly,
with a weathered family photograph sliding through
a rip.
I was late; I didn't have time
To stop and tell her her picture was in the snow.

Dianne Singer Harche

(Reprinted with permission of
Dianne Singer Harche)

Question: What thoughts or feelings do the two poets
have in common?

Writing assignment:

Write your response (about a page) to one of the following as if you were that person.

1. The Blind Man - How I feel on the subway or in crowds.
2. The old woman in the plastic coat - How I am feeling as I walk with what I am carrying and why I feel that way.

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:

A principal criterion deserving attention is the effectiveness of sustaining a single viewpoint (suggested scale 1-4).

From the standpoint of response to the poem it will be valuable to note whether the student identifies and develops a single insight or identifies and attempts to develop several (or unhappily, identifies none). For future discussion with the class, some notation of the frequency of occurrence of particular insights (e.g. isolation, abandonment, despair, hope, pride) will also give useful information.

The Blind Man

Once again I had to go to town. I needed food. I dreaded the long boring ride on the subway. I can remember the long silent stares of the watching people.

I set out. Frightened as I was I pushed myself on.

I knew the way down to the subway station but I still felt a little scared.

Finally I reached the station filled with people. The crowd hushed and I could feel the people staring and starting to wisper. This made me feel different, out of place and embarased. Why did they have to stare and whisper like that. Didn't they know how sad they made me feel.

I quickly walked the other way to get my ticket. Just then I walked right into a little boy. We both fell! The little boys father came running up yelling "Listen, watch where you're going! You shouldn't even be allowed to go anywhere! You could hurt some poor innocent person!"

I slowly stood up feeling sad and depressed. Why didn't he realize it was an accident. People sure are rude these days. They don't realize how lucky they are to be able to see.

I heard the sound of approaching footsteps.

"Can I help you or take you some where? asked a sweet soft voice.

I was so surprised that someone had talked to me I never answered her.

"Sir" she questioned.

"Yes, I'm going to buy some groceries and I could use some help," I replied.

"Okay, let's go and I'll help you buy some groceries and then take you home" she said kindly.

I was so happy when she offered that I almost jumped. Finally someone had realized how luckyly they were and had gave a helping hand.

Comment: A well designed treatment of the topic in the form of a narrative through which we obtain brief insights into the blind person's reflections or feelings. The writing is economical; the reader can derive the message.

The mature viewpoint is well sustained.

The Old Woman

My hands were freezing my ears were frost bitten. There was only one button left on my plastic jacket, but it was just about off as well. I was going to stop at a deli-catteson, but they wouldn't have no pity me, as long as they have some wer warm to go. I wonder now why I did'nt go to the old age home when my son said to but I said I want to be a independent person. I loved to go know but it's all the way across, I would never make it. I was tired so I went to a park bench and was cold I know I shouldn't sleep there but I didn't have no where to go. I couldn't sleep there so I wandered around some more looking for something that even looked warm. I finally slept in a back alley, it must have been 20 below. I fell asleep but was awaken by two kids screaming, up above in a apartment, it sounded like they were beening beaten. I wouldn't mind being beaten in the but right now it would warm me up. It hit supper time when I started to cough fiercly. I woke up in a hospital five hrs later. When they told me my bag was in closet I looked but there was no family picture there it must have fallen in the snow. I thought to myself, I was out in the cold for days now I let my family to the cold. It was the only family I have left but now there gone to.

Comment: Following an effective start, this composition tends to ramble a little as narrative. Nevertheless, the writer sustains well the viewpoint of the old woman, and, through the narrative, achieves numerous insights into her predicament.

There are numerous problems with sentence structure and with mechanics, and, obviously, paragraphing is needed.

The Blind Man

When I board the subway, its like a dark, black, lonely world, my own world with exclusively faces and voices. I find my way every day with a white cane and my senses. I feel so empty and lonesome, like I've been cut off from everything, and just when my life is beginning, its actually ended for me.

When I get on the subway, there is a sense of fear, as if someone might shove, or push me out of their way while trying to board the car. And that I might fall and injure myself in the process, and not make it home each night.

I fear being alone, nobody care for me. On the subway many people are talking and gossiping. They have someone to talk to unlike me. When someone does talk to me, I can't exactly tell what the person is like, except maybe a little by their tone of voice.

Being by yourself on the subway is quite fearful and nerve recking. I wish that I could have just one friend that I could talke to, relate to, and rely on.

Comment: This composition is exceedingly well focussed. The meditative and reflective tone is sustained, and made even more effective by excellent organization. The viewpoint, too, is well sustained and there are numerous insights - fear, isolation, a degree of despair, ending on a somewhat plaintive note.

The Poet Reflects on the Old Woman

The old lady's picture fell but I didn't have enough time to pick it up. I was on my way home and I had to make supper. The picture probably wasn't important because it was all weathered and torn. And if I was worth anything she could always get another one. Why should I help her, she would probably let me walk by without telling me if my picture fell, plus my arms were full of groceries.

So I passed her without another thought, I quickly walked across the street to the parking lot and went to my car. I opened the door and put in the groceries glad, that I was on my way home. I got in and closed the door and opened my purse to find my wallet. I had to pay the parking attendant, but where was it? I looked again and checked in my grocery bags but it wasn't there. I must have dropped it coming out of the store since I was in a hurry.

Why didn't anyone tell me I dropped it after all it would have only taken a second to tell me? Why do people have to be so selfish?

Comment: When this stimulus was originally screened, the student was given the option of taking the poet's role. Few students were able to do that well, but this composition is an interesting exception. Teachers may want to expand the choice of treatment to include this option.

This is an unusually clever turn of the knife of guilt - all the more effective because of the student's economy and restraint: the rationalization, then the loss of the wallet (because the poet was in a hurry), then the complaint about people who are selfish. The reader is left to make the link and to reflect.

The Blind Man

If I were the blind man I would always have that frightful feeling. I would be afraid that someone somewhere would hurt me because I was different; because I was blind. If I were blind and one day, just minding my own business and I heard people talking or laughing at or about me, I would feel very hurt because it is not them who has to live in darkness for the rest of their lives. It was me who must go through with it, day after day. Another thing that would hurt would never being able to see children laughing and playing or to see the birds flying around in the summer time. Usually when children see blind people they are quite curious as to how they got that way. This is not as bad as we realized that the children are not saying anything to hurt them but just to find out. But when it come to the older ones; especially the ones in their teens who know but they just feel like being ignorant. So when you see a blind person, don't treat them any different. The best way you can help them is just to treat them the same as anyone else.

Comment: This example illustrates a problem that occurred rather frequently. The student, rather than stepping right into the shoes of the blind person, attempted to reduce the risk by beginning "If I were the blind man, I would...". The result of this "modified" viewpoint almost inevitably is failure to sustain a single viewpoint. The writer shifts back into his/her own voice to comment on how children usually behave and concludes with a short lecture to the reader - in effect shifting into an expository (persuasive) mode.

Suggested time: 30 minutes (for writing assignment only)

To the teacher: Prior to giving the writing assignment, study the poem briefly with the class. (You might note the setting as the CNE - hence water - Lake Ontario). The focus should be on the question following the poem.

Flight of the Roller Coaster

One more around should do it, the man confided...

And sure enough, when the roller-coaster reached
the peak
Of the giant curve above me, screech of its wheels
Almost drowned by the shriller cries of the riders--

Instead of the dip and plunge with its landslide of
screams
It rose in the air like a movieland magic carpet,
some wonderful bird,

And without fuss or fanfare swooped slowly across
the amusement park,
Over Spook's Castle, ice-cream booths, shooting-
gallery; and losing no height

Made the last yards above the beach, 'where the
cucumber-cool
Brakeman in the last seat saluted
A lady about to change from her bathing-suit.

Then, as many witnesses duly reported, headed
leisurely over the water,
Disappearing mysteriously all too soon behind a
low-lying flight of clouds.

From THE COLOUR OF THE TIMES,
by Raymond Souster, Oberon
Press, 1979.

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of Oberon Press.

Question: In the poem what is actually happening, and what does the poet pretend is happening?

Writing assignment: Continue the flight of the roller coaster as if you were on it. What happens? How do you feel? What do you see?

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:(see also notes on #16, the Polar Bear):

It is of special interest to note, in classifying the writing, how many students completely sustain the poet's fantasy, how many sustain it for a time but return to the real world, and how many refuse the challenge of fantasy. In the screening trials, some students responded with a reflection about life and death, an interesting variation which deserves note.

The endings will be especially interesting: Back to the real world - simply a return to base, awakening from a dream or coma, and accident, or death - or continuing to some place of fantasy.

Flight of the Roller Coaster

The clouds hung in the sky around him, as far as he could see.

He sunk into the comfort of the seat and fell into a long, deep sleep.

He awoke to a great change. Gazing at the sight before him, he gasped in disbelief!

A silver creek carrying silver sparkles that caused your eyes to squint or flicker, flowed slowly past a massive wall of snow-white marble.

Directly in front of him stood a tall iron gate of midnight black.

To his surprise the gate was not locked and it opened with extreme easiness.

What he saw was beautiful, yet terrifying! Lifelike statues all in a row!

He moved closer to inspect them. "No, it can't be!" he thought to himself.

They were the people he loved! They were his friends, acquaintances and family.

He must get away from this awful place! He must return to the love and security he had known at his own cozy home!

He began to run! He heard a noise behind him, but no one was in sight! It's catching up to me! I must survive! I must keep on going!

All his strength was drained out of him. It was hopeless! He crawled a few feet more and then collapsed!

Nothing happened, all was still! When he awoke, a man was in front of him! It was the brakeman! He was safe!

Comment: The composition is somewhat over-written with a tedious series of exclamations. However, even though finally the passenger returns to the "real" world, the imaginative treatment is fascinating: the ride is symbolic of passage from life to death, and, through description and symbol, the next world is revealed as a place of cold beauty, ultimately terrifying. The writer fails to sustain the ride/journey metaphor completely (turns and runs) but the composition nevertheless reveals a writer with a gift.

The Flight of the Roller Coaster

As the roller coaster went flying into the sky, I screamed and screamed. It was like being in an airplane. It was very frightening. I closed my eyes so I wouldn't see what was happening. As we got closer and closer the more scared I got I new I shouldn't have went on this ride, but it was to late to think of that now. I could here the screaming and yelling of the others. The more they screamed the more I screamed. I looked down and there was a whole pile of people. We passed over the circus and we passed over the horse race's, and god knows what all but I was awful scared. I was so scared infact I ducked down in my seat and screamed the roller coaster had hit the ground.

That was the end of the ride it also was the end of us.

That was on wild trip!

Comment: By contrast, this "flight" never escapes the real world - a rather strong example of the "terrible accident" treatment, quite out of keeping with the spirit of the poem.

The second conclusion is utterly redundant. Sentences are generally choppy, and there is much repetition of words rather than variety of word choice.

Suggested time: 30 minutes (for writing assignment only)

To the teacher: Before giving the writing assignment, have the class spend a few minutes with the poem and solicit reponse to the question that follows the poem.

Demolition

Where the wreckers left off,
ground floor to go
on this red-stone mansion,

a part of the stairway
still stands, mounting up
the way it must go,

giving any old ghosts
two more days of grace
to ascend, descend,
then clear out forever.

From DOUBLE-HEADER by
Raymond Souster, Oberon
Press, 1975.

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of Oberon Press.

Question: Describe what the poet sees.

Writing assignment:

EITHER Pretend you once lived in the house and express your further thoughts aroused by the scene. How do you feel? What memories do you have? What is your attitude to what is happening?

OR Be one of the "ghosts" on the stairs. What are your memories and your thoughts about what is happening?

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions:

The stimulus, whether the student chooses to be the previous owner or a ghost, calls for both memory and reflection. It is, therefore, useful to record the balance of these in each composition. Many students will tend to write only of memories; others will stress the reflective.

The themes that emerged as reflections in the screening trials proved most interesting, and it may be valuable to record the frequency of some of these for future discussion: transience generally, sorrow at time's passage but with a sense of inevitability, anger at waste or loss of beauty, commentary (usually negative) on "progress", reflection on life and death.

The Departure of His Life's Keeper

The poet sees an old house, which has already been half torn down. The remains of a staircase to the second floor are still standing.

Lif isn't fair, but this is not life, now is it? It is more of a suspended moment in time; haunting the past, the present, the future. Still, he thinks this is not fair, the house his father built being torn down.

The memories of that structure are numerous, but only for him. He can remember the time his father returned from hunting with a deer slung over the dogsled. Did they ever feast that time! Two grand days of partying; he can still hear the voices of the guests.

And now, now those memories will be banished from earth with the removal of their "keeper" (the house).

He wanders along the empty corridors, not understanding why. Why would they want to tear down his lovely house? For he lives in the past, not seeing the cobwebs, only the piano. Not seeing the rats, only the many puppies. And not seeing the truth. He doesn't notice the empty rooms, for to him the rooms are overfilled with people, memories.

He hears the wreckers coming back. He feels a hand on his shoulder, lifting his form with superior guidance. He smiles, then fades out of sight - never to haunt his palace again. For that is the way of God.

Comment: The narrative stance we ultimately realize is the ghost (poet?). This needs to be more clearly established. Otherwise this composition is a fine example of the synthesis of symbol, memory, and reflection. The reflection on truth (versus hanging on to a past) is particularly mature and tantalizing, as if the writer had insight into living people who live as "ghosts". The conclusion, though it provides a disposition for the ghost, is a little stilted.

Ghosts

I've been very depressed for the last week. I know that I shall have to find a new place to live or I must ascend or descend. I have about two more days to live here, although it doesn't seem like home anymore because most of it is wrecked.

I remember when I died it was in this old mansion, where I lived for twenty years. I remember falling down the steep stairs, and that's where I remained.

I remember always being worried that someone else would move into my mansion. Well, I guess I won't have to worry about it anymore.

I have haunted this old house for over ten years. It just won't be the same.

Well, I am going to miss this place, but who knows I might enjoy my new home.

Comment: The writer has chosen the role of the ghost, rather awkwardly quoting the poem to establish location. The treatment is chiefly "memory", but detail is very thin. There is only marginal attention to reflection.

The writer has not achieved a focus or perspective; consequently, though the viewpoint is sustained throughout, the composition lacks texture or personality.

Fantasy

16. A Polar Bear in My Shower

Grades: 7-10 (also successfully tried at Grade 6)

Suggested time: 30-40 minutes



(Sketch courtesy of
Department of Education,
Province of New Brunswick).

Imagine that you have just come into your bathroom and discovered a polar bear taking a shower.

Write a story of a page to a page and a half telling what happens next. Begin at the point when you discover the bear.

Note to teachers on Additional scoring suggestions: (See also #14, Flight of the Roller Coaster)

The most interesting and valuable description of the writing lies not in scores received but in the type of response students make when they are given no further direction than provided here. Here a simple classification scheme can be recommended:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| "Ducking" the
Challenge: | (i) Only a dream (see first example)
(ii) Bear treated as an object in the
real world - to be returned to
the zoo, or circus, or shot.
(see fourth example)
(iii) A person dressed up |
| "Accepting" the
Challenge: | (The student sustains imaginary
world):
(i) Dialogue with the bear as a
chief means of development
(ii) Chiefly a narrative treatment
(see third example)
(iii) Mythical or legendary (see
second example) |

Some very good treatments are mixed (see first example), wherein the fantasy world is well sustained before the student "ducks" at the end.

A Polar Bear in My Shower

Ah! Home at last from fishing. I'm going to take a shower I said to myself. To my surprise I discover a polar bear in my shower.

Get out! Get out! This is my house and I would like to take a shower I screamed"

The bear looked at me and growled. I handed him the towel and told him to leave. He dried himself off and sat down on the floor.

I walked into the kitchen with my fish. I then cleaned and cooked the fish. The bear came out of the bathroom and sat down at the table. Then, then it happened. The bear started to talk to me.

We ate and did the dishes. Then, in the main parlor we sat down to watch television. It was soon time for bed.

"Come with me, I told the bear."

The bear was angry and had white hair. He was big and fat and had big feet. The bear's hair was damp and full of knots. He combed the knots out of his fur and dried it. He then crawled into bed.

The next morning my mother was shaking me and telling me I was dreaming. I said to myself this is no dream it is a fantasy.

Comment: This is a good composition which "ducks" the challenge of fantasy. Except for the weak ending, however, the composition is imaginatively developed and there is effective engagement with the bear - it joins the writer for supper, relaxes with television, and tidies up for bed.

Easy Come, Easy Go

It was early one winter evening just after eight when I returned hot and sweaty from my gymnastics practice. I walked in the back door, down the hall to my room, grabbed my bath robe and headed for the bathroom. As I approached the door, I heard the shower running hard. It was open so I ventured in. Someone was behind the curtain, probably my sister.

"Hurry up in there eh! There will be no hot water left by the time you get out." The shower stopped. A cushion-like paw stepped onto the rug and was following by a tall slim mound of fur? I shrieked, for there in front of me stood a clean fluffy white polar bear.

"Don't be frightened," the animal said, "I'm friendly." It leaned forward to shake my hand and introduced himself. "My name is Ollie Ballie Nutshell from the North Pole. I came in with the snowstorm I think. A "Cloud" just picked me up and the next thing I knew, I landed in your back yard. Just couldn't resist the opportunity to get cleaned off in your enchanted castle of a home. By the way, What's your name?"

"St, St, Stephanie," I said stuttering, still frightened out of my wits. As the hours passed, we talked alot to one another. He explained what it was like to live in the North Pole and I told him how it was living in a city. "Ollie, will you stay here with me and be my pet?" I inquired sweetly.

"Sure I will!" said Ollie, "For the rest of my life, because I like you."

No sooner than the last syllable left his mouth the window shattered. A gust of wind blew in, picked Ollie off his feet and away he went into the clouds. I cried his name but he was gone, perhaps for ever.

The next day, to remind me of Ollie I went to the novelty shop where they carried stuffed animals. I found a exact polar bear look alike and bought it. During the night I awoke and looked at my toy. I could have sworn it smiled and winked but who would believe a little girl like me.

Comment: A most imaginative composition with full "engagement" of bear and writer, including use of dialogue. It also includes an ingredient of myth or supernatural. A delightful ending.

The Bear Facts

I was walking into the bathroom the other day, shampoo and soap in hand, all set to take a nice, hot, steamy, shower, when I discovered that someone had beaten me to it.

I stood there for a litte while, patiently waiting for whoever it was to finish. Naturally, my little mind didn't realize that I was the only person home, so whoever was in there shouldn't have been.

It wasn't until the door opened and a polar bear, wearing a towel, stepped out and asked me for my blow dryer, that I was suddenly struck with the thought that something strange was going on. I wasn't quite sure what it was yet, but I was working on it.

After I started taking my shower, I finally realized what was strange. Polar Bears don't use blow dryers!

I was about to step out and ask the bear if this was a special day for her, when another bear knocked on the door and asked if I was finished with the water, because she wanted to do her laundry.

It turned out that they had been forced to leave thier den, due to a forest fire, and were looking for a place to live.

I now live with my mother, father and 3 very well-mannered polar bears.

Comment: This is another imaginative treatment, chiefly narrative. The addition of a second bear is a particularly refreshing touch, and the student employs a good exit line. Despite a slight error in geography in explaining the bears' presence, the composition is so refreshing otherwise that the reader scarcely notices.

A Polar Bear in My Shower

I just got home from work and wanted to take a shower, so I went into the bathroom to take one.

I opened the door and put the shampoo down when I heard the sound of water running in the shower. So I headed down to turn it off. I opened the doors and to my surprise, it was occupied. At first I thought it was a lady in a white fur coat but then I looked at the head of the being and saw it was a bear.

"Holy!...." I started to say when the bear looked at me. I slammed the shower doors closed and ran out of the room.

I headed for the living room and when I got there I sat down. I was trying to think of what was going on. After setting my head straight about everything, I realized I had left the radio on. I listened to the announcement which broke into the middle of the song.

I stated that a trained polar bear had escaped from the circus. It wouldn't hurt anyone if they didn't tease it. If anyone saw it they were to try to keep it in one place and phone the circus, and the keepers would be right there to pick it up. There would be a reward for the capturing of it.

After hearing this, I phoned the number and told them it was in my shower.

I hung up and went to lock the bathroom door when I noticed it was waddling out of the room, dripping all over my carpet.

"Oh no!" I said backing against the couch. Just then I thought maybe he was hungry, so I ran into the kitchen and got an armload of grub.

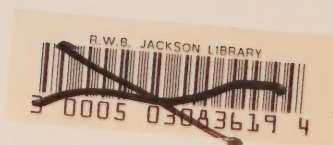
He began to eat when I heard a knock at the door.

I snuck away and ran to open it. It was the guys from the circus. I let them in and without a word, they walked over and put a long chain onto his collar.

They led him out without a problem, like it happens all the time. Then one of the men handed me a hundred dollar bill, and said thanks.

Man, what a day.

Comment: This composition, although a satisfactory piece of narrative in most respects, illustrates the failure to engage the bear as a "person" (in contrast to the first example) and the ducking of the challenge. The bear remains simply an object to be returned to the circus.



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